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University of Huddersfield: Exploiting Library Impact Data

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In 2011 the Library Impact Data Project (LIDP) aimed to support the hypothesis that

'there is a statistically significant correlation across a number of universities between library activity data and student attainment.'

The baseline project involved eight institutions in 2011: University of Bradford; De Montfort University; University of Exeter; University of Huddersfield; University of Lincoln; Liverpool John Moores University; University of Salford; Teesside University.

The project used the student's final grade (as a class), the course title and several variables relating to library usage:

- Number of books borrowed
- Number of times library e-resources were accessed
- Number of times each student entered the library.

At the end of the project the hypothesis was successfully supported for e-resources and books borrowed for all eight institutional partners. A complete set of anonymised data was released as part of the dissemination and the project was mentioned in SCONUL's response to the Higher Education White Paper ["Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System"](#).

The second phase of the project (ending October 2012) investigated possible causal aspects. This involves enriched data such as demographic information and student's final grade (as a percentage, rather than a class) to provide better management information. This has resulted in some interesting findings that are worthy of further investigation.

We have looked in detail at retention, and we can now say that, **based on those dropping out in the third term of study, if students do not use e-resources they are over seven times more likely to drop out of their degree.** When looking at PDF downloads alone they are nearly eight times more likely to drop out. **Although we cannot say that non-usage causes students to drop out, it could be used as an early warning system. If students are not using the library's e-resources, it is likely to be worth checking to make sure all is well.** Not using the library does not automatically mean you are at risk of dropping out, but library usage data could be another tool within the armoury of student support services, one part of a complex picture which helps them to understand which students might be at risk of failing to complete their degree.

Other findings show different levels of use by gender, ethnicity, disability and country of domicile. These findings represent actionable insights of a very practical nature. **The data could be exploited to concentrate staff resources (both library and other student support) at points of need, and to examine whether students from different backgrounds have different needs** when it comes to library and learning content services.

There is now significant interest in the findings of the Library Impact Data Project from a number of UK Universities, as well as institutions in the United States and Australia. This shows a great deal of potential for further analysis and perhaps collaboration on a national (through a shared service) or international level to gain a greater understanding of usage data for business intelligence and ultimately to enhance the student experience and improve attainment. To this end the LIDP is undertaking a feasibility study looking into the appetite for a shared service for library usage analytics.